

The press release below from the Ontario Public Services Employees Union provides clear indication that even employees with the York Region Children's Aid Society feel that serious problems exist within the York Region CAS. This press release reveals incidents involving discrimination, harassment, intimidation, coercion and favouritism by workers at the York Region CAS – the very same complaints that children and parents in the community have reported about this agency!

Possible employee strike at York Region CAS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - July 23, 2004

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TORONTO

About 210 employees of the York Region Children's Aid Society could be on strike as early as Aug. 11.

Members of Local 304 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, they were unable to reach a settlement during two days of mediation. They have rejected the employer's last offer by a margin of 88 per cent, and authorized a strike, if necessary, by a margin of 82 per cent.

Key issues in the contract dispute are wages, harassment language and the term of the agreement.

"The employer just doesn't understand that there are serious problems in this workplace. We're trying to explain that our members need comparable wage rates, and that there are administrative problems. So far they just aren't listening," said Sherry Weese, union negotiator.

The employer is offering 3 per cent in each of three years, but the union says this would not

produce pay scales comparable to similar CASs in Ontario. The union is seeking 5, 4 and 3 per cent over three years. If the wage offer is not higher, the union wants a shorter contract.

Unlike other CASs, the York Region society separates social workers into two groups and pays those working with families more than those working with children. The union wants the groups combined at the higher rate.

OPSEU also wants contractual language dealing with discrimination and harassment to deal with incidents of intimidation, coercion and favouritism in the workplace.

The society covers all of York Region, with offices in Newmarket, Keswick and Richmond Hill. The union staff includes social workers, administrative assistants, clerical and support workers. Their work covers foster care, adoptions, children's and family services and child protection. The previous contract expired March 31, 2004.

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